

# Summary

## *Mechta o velikom, zhazhda moguchevo...*

### **Narrative aspects of the contemporary Russian language policy**

This work attempts to analyse and interpret the narrative aspects of language policy created and promoted by the Russian federal authorities since 1991. It exposes a number of views on the Russian language, its status, condition, and how it relates to other languages as shared by key Russian national representatives, in particular the president of the Russian Federation. Through studying and characterising these views, the author seeks to explain what type of world-view they reveal and what type of collective activity they suggest. He also focuses on how the current federal ideological schemes remain anchored in certain traditions of perceiving, defining, displaying, and managing language issues by the Russian state.

The book's crucial problem is with respect to the federal authorities' expectations regarding social approaches to language policy questions. It implies reflection on imaginings and attitudes regarding language policy propagated by federal agendas in the Russian public discourse. In this context, the issue of symbolic meanings assigned by the state to particular languages, especially Russian, emerges. Moreover, the book seeks to recognize the narrative employed by the Russian authorities to influence linguistic cultures inside and outside Russia. This narrative is evaluated through reference to one of the crucial categories of Joshua Fishman's sociology of language, i.e., the concept of beloved language. By exploiting its theoretical potential, the work reveals that Russian Federation authorities do not abstain from vigorously persuading a broad public with regard to which language deserves to be appreciated most.

This book focuses not only on exposing the federal agenda's lack of axiological distance vis-à-vis language attitudes cultivated by Russians; it also attempts to determine whether the representatives exercising federal power are eager and able to separate their personal language preferences from any narrative activity conducted on behalf of the state. To address this question, author presents a broad choice of sources that illustrate the deep belief shared by various federal agents in extraordinary richness and exclusiveness of the Russian language. Consequently, the linguistic culture of the Russian federal authorities – manifesting itself in numerous institutional acts and public announcements – proves to be intensely subjective and idiosyncratic. This means that federal political elites in Russia tend to differentiate between esteem for Russian and for other languages. In their narratives, they do not avoid templates suggesting a hierarchy of languages. Such suggestions often match opinions about the unique qualities of the sole state language of the Russian Federation, and even the cultural or moral superiority of its users.

The theories in this work exist within the paradigm of historical institutionalism. However, such typical categories as path dependency or critical juncture are not employed directly. Nevertheless, the reasoning is developed in the search for a well-balanced interpretation, which can be achieved by treating those two concepts as complementary. They are recognized as two categories that offer different suggestions within the dispute on agency, which is immutably crucial in the humanities and social sciences. In this context, path dependency is a concept that allows the belief that the flow of events is informed mainly by macro-phenomena determining the activities of individuals entangled in the historical process. Simultaneously, focusing attention on critical junctures supports the belief that individuals or groups are agents capable of modifying the directions of their socio-cultural development quite significantly.

The book attempts to combine and balance both of these perspectives. It is therefore founded on the opinion that social reality – extended in space, but rooted in time – remains the outcome of present trends informed by past legacies. In this context, narrative elements of the Russian language policy are understood as belonging to the world of sociocultural phenomena, constantly reshaped at the crossroads of old suggestions and new ambitions.